

Message Text

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SUBJECT: US-GREEK BASE NEGOTIATIONS-DISCUSSION WITH
BITSIOS

1. DURING THE COURSE OF A LONG MEETING I HAD WITH
FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS APRIL 12, I RAISED THE PROBLEM
WE WERE HAVING IN THE NEGOTIATIONS IN REACHING AGREEMENT
ON THE STATUS AND FUTURE OF OUR FACILITIES AT THE HELLENIKON
AIR BASE. I SAID THAT THE US SIDE WAS MAKING A MAJOR EFFORT
TO TRY AND REACH AGREEMENT ON THIS AND ON OTHER QUESTIONS
THAT WERE ARISING BUT THAT THEY SEEMED TO BE ENCOUNTERING
A FAR LESS FLEXIBLE OR UNDERSTANDING POSITION THAN HE,
BITSIOS, AND DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF HAD EARLIER ASSURED
ME WOULD BE THE CASE.

2. BITSIOS ASKED ME TO BE SPECIFIC AND TELL HIM WHAT
THE PROBLEM WAS. I SAID THAT MY UNDERSTANDING WAS
THE THE GREEK DELEGATION WAS INSISTING THAT NONE OF THE
US FACILITIES AT HELLENIKON SERVED GREECE'S SECURITY
REQUIREMENTS AND, THEREFORE, THAT THE ENTIRE BASE AND ALL
OF THE US FACILITIES THERE HAD TO BE TERMINATED. IN FACT,
I SAID, I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION AT ONE POINT DURING THE
WEEK THAT THE GREEK DELEGATION WAS UNWILLING EVEN TO
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LISTEN TO A COUNTER PROPOSAL FROM THE US OF ANYTHING LESS THAN

COMPLETE TERMINATION OF THESE FACILITIES. I TOLD BITSIOS THAT AFTER EACH DAY'S NEGOTIATING SESSION, I RECEIVED A REPORT ON WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED AND THAT WE ALSO SENT A TELEGRAPHIC REPORT TO WASHINGTON. I SAID THAT THESE DAILY TELEGRAMS WERE CREATING SOME CONSTERNATION IN WASHINGTON. WHEN HE ASKED WHY, I RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT U.S. OFFICIALS MUST BE ASKING THEMSELVES HOW THE GREEK GOVERNMENT COULD BE REQUESTING OVER \$800 MILLION IN MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM THE US RESCHEDULING OF DEBT OWED IN THE US, ALL KINDS OF NEW ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, HELP FROM THE SECRETARY ON THE CYPRUS PROBLEM AND ON GREEK-TURKISH BILATERAL PROBLEMS, SUPPORT FROM THE US IN THE UN, WORLD BANK, AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS--AND AT THE SAME TIME ADOPT SUCH AN UNCOMPROMISING AND UNCOOPERATIVE ATTITUDE IN THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS, PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS HELLENIKON.

3. BITSIOS LAUGHED AND TOLD ME NOT TO WORRY. HE SAID HE WOULD ABSOLUTELY GUARANTEE ME 100 PERCENT THAT "THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE SUCCESSFUL." HE SAID THAT HE HAD GOTTEN GENERAL GUIDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS THAT HAD BEEN THE BASIS FOR SPECIFIC NEGOTIATING INSTRUCTIONS HE HAD GIVEN TO AMBASSADOR CALOGERAS AND THE GREEK DELEGATION. THESE NEGOTIATING INSTRUCTIONS WERE BASED ON CARAMANLIS PRECEPT THAT ANYTHING THAT SERVED GREECE'S SECURITY INTERESTS DIRECTLY COULD BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN AND IT SHOULD BE PRESUMED THAT ANYTHING THAT DID NOT WOULD HAVE TO GO. HOWEVER, BITSIOS SAID, HE WAS SURE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER DID NOT WISH TO CAUSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS TO THE US. THEREFORE, IF THE FACILITIES AT HELLENIKON PRESENTED A PROBLEM FOR US, WE SHOULD TELL THE GREEK SIDE SPECIFICALLY WHAT IT WAS WE FELT HAD TO BE CONTINUED AND HE, BITSIOS, WOULD ASSURE ME THAT IT WOULD RECEIVE THE MOST SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION.

4. BITSIOS WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE ALSO RECEIVED A DAILY REPORT OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT HIS IMPRESSION WAS THAT THEY WERE PROCEEDING RATHER WELL. HE IMPLIED STRONGLY-WITHOUT SAYING SO SPECIFICALLY--THAT THE GOG
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WOULD CONCUR IN OUR RETAINING CERTAIN LIMITED FACILITIES AT HELLENIKON. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT IMPORTANT CHANGES HAD TO TAKE PLACE THERE, THERE COULD NOT SIMPLY BE A CHANGING OF SIGNS AND FLAGS AND A TOKEN REDUCTION IN FACILITIES OF SAY 10PC. SURELY, HE SAID, THE US COULD REDUCE ITS FACILITIES AND PERSONNEL BY 50PC OR SO AT HELLENIKON. DIDN'T I AGREE?
I SAID I COULD NOT AGREE, THAT THIS HAD TO BE THE SUBJECT

OF DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS BY THE EXPERTS ON THE US SIDE. BITSIOS SAID, OKAY, FOR THE EXPERTS TO TELL CALOGERAS ON MONDAY WHICH FACILITIES THE US FELT IT HAD TO RETAIN AT HELLENIKON AND OUR PROPOSALS FOR ADAPTING THEM INTO AN OVERALL GREEK CONTROLLED OR SUPERVISED BASE. IF WE DID THIS, HE SAID, HE WOULD THEN TAKE THE SUBJECT UP IN EQUALLY SPECIFIC TERMS AND TRY AND GET THE PRIME MINISTER'S APPROVAL BEFORE THEY DEPARTED FOR PARIS ON WEDNESDAY.

5. I TOLD BITSIOS THAT SOME OF THE ISSUES AND FACILITIES WERE VERY TECHNICAL AND COMPLEX AND THAT I WAS NOT SURE IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO SORT THEM ALL OUT BY MONDAY. IN ANY CASE, I SAID I WOULD REPORT OUR CONVERSATION TO THE TOP AUTHORITIES IN WASHINGTON AND KNEW THEY WOULD BE RELIEVED TO LEARN ONCE AGAIN OF HIS REASSURANCES CONCERNING THESE NEGOTIATIONS.
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